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MISS BROWN.

IN FOURTEEN CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

MISS PRISCILLA BROWN looked at herself anxiously in her little bedroom glass, and wondered if her mourning would do. 'I should like to have been able to afford myself a new black dress,' she thought; 'and my bonnet is very shabby, in spite of the new ribbons. Poor Mrs Barker! It won't signify to her, but I shouldn't like it to be thought that I hadn't cared to pay respect to her memory.' Then she began to smooth her dyed silk, to pinch out the half-rusty crape, that it might stand out more crisply, and to re-arrange the new black bonnet-strings, which alone in their glossy stiffness seemed to affront the rest of the half-worn dress. On the whole, she hoped to pass unremarked in the company who were to meet that day to hear the funeral service read over the deceased Mrs Barker. And though the reflection did not occur to her, she might have told herself that she would probably be the only genuine mourner there.

She was not related, even distantly, to Mrs Barker. But they had been neighbours in the same street of the same town for more than ten years, and an acquaintanceship had grown up between them, on which Miss Brown, now that it was over, looked back as a friendship. Their intercourse had indeed contained elements not quite compatible with a real friendship. Mrs Barker was captious, sarcastic, and domineering. Miss Brown was nervous and timid; but along with her fear of the elder lady's temper had been mingled a great pity for her loneliness, and even for the moroseness which made her so intolerable to those less gentle and patient than Miss Brown. And now the latter forgot the tyranny and temper, and thought sorrowfully of the poor woman's bodily sufferings, and mental discontent, and unhappiness; and penitently of her own occasional failures in patient sympathy; and looking back on their ten years' neighbourhood, she knew that she would in future be much more sensible of the loss of Mrs Barker's society than she had ever been of the pleasure of it.

Another friend gone too, then! She wished she had discovered sooner that Mrs Barker had been a friend after all, in spite of her oddities and tempers. But Miss Brown had been fancying that her day for friendships was over. More than twenty years ago, one 'friendship' had come to such sudden and fatal shipwreck, that she seemed never since to have cared about making another. She had known many bitter partings, many sorrowful good-byes. That one had been the bitterest of all, because she had been forced to keep its bitterness to herself. When one morning, her cousin, Robert Dixon, had come to tell her that he was going to be married, she had smiled at the news, and wished him joy, and had then said a good-bye in her own heart to what seemed like her own life. That was more than twenty years ago. But somehow Priscilla Brown had felt since that time that she was too old to make new friendships and think of new loves.

Yet she was not really very old or unlovable. She looked perhaps more than her real age, which was forty-four, partly because of the style of her dress, which for ten years had been that of an elderly woman; partly because of a certain formality and stiffness of manner, proceeding from natural shyness. She was tall, and her figure was still slight and graceful. Her face had scarcely been what could be called pretty; but the eyes were soft, the expression serene and sweet, and her complexion had been exquisitely fair and clear. The youthful freshness and the ivory smoothness of skin were gone, but the delicate purity of tint still remained; and even those who had known Priscilla in former days, and under the old pet childish name of 'Lily,' which suited so well her fairness and slender grace, might have thought that years had dealt very gently with her, and left her much of her youthful attractiveness. But among her present acquaintances, there were only two who had known her in her youth. She had come to settle in Millchester with an invalid sister about fifteen years ago; and after her sister's death, had continued to live there, because the quiet lodgings in one or other of its dull back streets suited her

slender purse, and because she had no inducement to go anywhere else. To the few Millchester people who had got to know the quiet, solitary, stiff old maid, she was simply Miss Brown, or 'poor Miss Brown'—a forlorn unit in that helpless mass of reduced gentlewomen whose one duty to the busy, bustling world is to keep, if possible, out of its way.

The two people who could remember, if they cared to do so, what she had been in days gone by were her cousins, Mr Robert Dixon, and his sister, Mrs Lorimer, and they, indeed, had not much time to give to such reminiscences. Mr Dixon was a prosperous banker, with a handsome house a little way out of the town. He was a widower now; and his sister, who was a widow, had lived with him, and kept his house, and looked after his children, ever since his wife's death. She had ample means of her own, and her residence with her brother was simply a piece of obliging benevolence on her part. It is to be feared that, though Miss Brown knew this, she had never been able thoroughly to appreciate this sisterly behaviour; for sometimes, during the first years of Mr Dixon's widowerhood, she had wondered if he could have quite forgotten how he had once liked her, and allowed her to see that he did so. Mrs Lorimer, however, would only have smiled had she guessed that her cousin entertained any notion of supplanting her; and Priscilla herself was secretly ashamed of her own grudge against her, for Mrs Lorimer was a tolerably good-natured woman, with the good-nature which even selfish people, if prosperous and happy, can afford to shew to those who are not likely to interfere with their well-being. She was kind, in her own way, to the poor relation; and Miss Brown, conscious that her secret bitterness of spirit was unchristian and unworthy, struggled against it, and, as a sort of penance for her depravity, tried to see only the intended kindness, and not the occasional insolence of the fashion of it. Thus they had continued on sufficiently friendly terms. Miss Brown had paid short visits now and then at Elm Grove, Mr Dixon's villa; and Mrs Lorimer came to call on her, and brought her presents of flowers and vegetables—not, perhaps, the very choicest that grew in the Elm Grove gardens, but good enough to be, as Mrs Lorimer said, 'very nice and useful in a small Millchester lodging.' There was no natural reason why the flowers should not smell sweet, and why the peas and cauliflower should seem to have lost their flavour; and Miss Brown tried to accept them gratefully, and make the most of them. As to the hot-house grapes and greenhouse flowers that she would sometimes see on the table by Mrs Barker's sofa, and which she knew came likewise from Elm Grove, she reminded herself that, to an invalid like Mrs Barker, these delicacies were only appropriate offerings; and she was even generous enough to resent, with some family pride, the sneers with which the cynical old lady once criticised Mrs Lorimer's motives in supplying her with such tributes of affection. 'She is my cousin, Mrs Barker; and I

am sure she means kindly.' To which Mrs Barker had rudely replied: 'I make you welcome, then, to all your cousin's kindness, and I wish you much joy of it. I'm glad I haven't come yet to be thankful for such small mercies'—words which brought tears into Miss Brown's gentle eyes, but to which she only retorted by repeating her vindication of Mrs Lorimer's kindly intentions. A coolness had followed this little scene, but the quarrel was made up over Mrs Barker's next attack of neuralgic pain. When she was suffering from this, Miss Brown forgave her everything.

Thinking of these sufferings now, she could forget all the crossness and roughness which they had caused. 'Poor woman! poor Mrs Barker! Well, she is happier now, I trust. I ought to think of that;' and she was wiping away a tear with her fine, clean pocket-handkerchief, forgetting its fineness, and that the proper time for producing it in the worshipful company of well-dressed mourners was not come, when she heard a sudden clatter and commotion in the street, and looking out, saw that a carriage had stopped at the door, and that Mrs Lorimer, in the richest and newest of mourning, was sweeping into the house.

CHAPTER II.

Mrs Lorimer, too, was on her way to attend the solemnity of the day. 'I found it was rather early,' she said, as she came in, 'so I thought I might as well come round and give you a seat;' and having taken one herself, as she spoke, in her cousin's parlour, it soon became plain that she had come less for the purpose of saving her the five minutes' walk to the end of the street, than of enjoying a little preliminary gossip, which would have been out of place in the house of mourning, and for which Miss Brown was not much more disposed just then than she was to make her shabby dress and tearful eyes more conspicuous by arriving in an ostentatious carriage, instead of upon her own humble feet. She could not, however, decline the offered seat; and, to her relief, Mrs Lorimer noticed neither her dyed silk nor her red eyelids, being too much occupied with reflections on more important subjects.

'So, there's Mrs Barker gone! Well, we must all die. It's a mercy, poor old woman, that she didn't last longer. Her temper was something frightful.'

'She had much to suffer,' said Miss Brown softly—so softly that Mrs Lorimer scarcely heard her.

'I wonder how she has left her money. She was such a curious woman, that, for my part, I shouldn't be surprised if she had made some extraordinary will. They say she had no really confidential lawyer.'

'There must be some relations, I suppose,' said Miss Brown, who, until this moment, had scarcely thought of a will at all.

'No,' said Mrs Lorimer quickly. 'I've reason to know, for I've made inquiries, that she had no relations at all. Her husband had some, I know, but they have nothing to do with her. She might leave her fortune to you or me if she liked. Of course, Priscilla, she will have left you a remembrance; you were always very attentive to her.'

Miss Brown's face flushed with a sudden, not unpleasant agitation of hope. She had never thought of a possible legacy to herself; she had

never got a legacy in her life. Supposing that she had been left a remembrance, as Mrs Lorimer called it. A 'remembrance,' she understood, generally meant 'ten pounds to buy a mourning-ring.' There was a momentary struggle in her mind over the mourning-ring. Would it be necessary for her to spend even part of her ten pounds, if she got them, on such a useless ornament? Would not a mourning black-silk dress, or new shawl, be as suitable a tribute to the memory of her friend? Then, with an instinctive dread of allowing herself to entertain the hope of such a windfall, she said: 'I'm sure I don't expect anything; I never thought of it.'

'Well, all I say is, it will be very odd if none of her friends here are remembered; I am sure she has been trouble enough to them. The times and times I've felt it was just my duty to go and see what the old woman was doing, and how she was, because really she seemed to have no one to look after her! Not that I expect to see a sixpence of her money.' Then Miss Brown perceived that Mrs Lorimer considered herself entitled to a legacy too, and naturally she could not help thinking of the chances of her own, though she did so with a thrill of contrition at the unfeelingness of such calculations.

When they arrived at Mrs Barker's house, Mrs Lorimer kept her wits about her, and had a sharp eye on the looks and manners of the other mourners, and reckoning up her own claims against what she knew of theirs, believed that she might be sure of a hundred pounds at least. Ten pounds were a good deal more to Miss Brown than a hundred were to her cousin. Yet she again forgot all about her possible legacy while she stood, squeezed into a corner, thinking regretfully of the evenings she had spent with Mrs Barker in this very room; and which, dreary enough as they had been, would have been still drearier to the solitary, morose old lady, if Miss Brown had not tried to cheer them.

CHAPTER III.

The funeral was over. Miss Brown was sitting at home in her little parlour, having taken off and carefully put away her black dress. She had done so with a little hesitation. It seemed unfeeling to change the black dress for a brown one on the very evening of her friend's funeral; but economy had been too long a serious consideration with her to allow of her departing from her daily frugal habits; besides, she considered that by saving her black dress she might do Mrs Barker's memory more honour before the world, than by wearing it out in the solitude of her own fireside. But she laid aside her usual needlework, and sat thinking of the service which she had that day attended. And then she thought of her own funeral service, and wondered if, when she died, there would be a single human being to shed one such genuine tear for her as she had shed that day for Mrs Barker. No; there would be no one to mourn her death, even as there was no one who really cared much about her life. She had tried to fulfil the duties which came in her way. She was gentle and kind to the lodging maid-of-all-work; she gave out of her penury to those poorer than herself; and struggling with, and in part subduing her own shrinking from the task, she had taken a share of

those thankless duties of a charity collector, which seem to be generally thrust upon single women. But, after all, what part had she in the world's work, and who would miss her when she left it? What was she to anybody, and what was anybody to her?

Then, even as the tears filled her eyes, her thoughts wandered back to the days when things had been different with her, when she had little dreamed of this cheerless and solitary old age. In her reverie, she saw herself as she had once been, young and pretty, and happy with a quiet, serene happiness and hope. How confident that hope of hers had been! how sure she had been that life was very sweet, and that as she loved, so she was loved again! She had been mistaken; and for many a year the recollection of this mistake of hers used to bring a painful spasm to her heart, and a flush of shame to her face. Now, though she could think of it more calmly, still it was a thought from which she shrank uncomfortably. To-night this uncomfortable recollection seemed to rise before her more prominently than usual. And more distinctly than usual too, came a remembrance of another kind, which always had the power of soothing and comforting her, even though the actual thing on which she looked back had been more painful than pleasant to her at the time when it happened.

She had been a girl of eighteen when her cousin, Robert Dixon, had begun paying her those attentions which had first flattered her vanity, and easily won her affection. He had not meant anything serious, but it was some years before she discovered this; and before she had made the discovery, and got her eyes opened to the mistake into which she had fallen, she had refused the only offer which had ever been made her—thanks, perhaps, to her own secret confidence in her cousin, and consequent indifference to every one else. It was the recollection of that genuine love, which had been so honestly and earnestly, and even passionately pressed on her, which at once pained and soothed her; only, as time went on, even her soft heart had got to find more and more satisfaction in the thought of the very pain which her refusal had caused to her unlucky lover. It was pleasant to know that she had been so loved once, little as any one cared about her now. It was comforting, in the midst of her sad reflections about how little any one would grieve for her death, to be able to say to herself: 'I wonder if he remembers me still? He told me, even when I refused him, that he would never forget me while he lived. I wonder if he would be sorry to hear of my death?'

The little maid of the lodging brought in her tea, which gave a new direction to her meditations. There had been a rise of a halfpenny in the prices of sugar and bread, and this idea came to add its weight to her already depressed spirits. It was reported too that coals were to be dearer, and winter was only beginning. Miss Brown sighed; and then, remembering what Mrs Lorimer had been saying, began to think, with a sort of fearful, nervous anxiety, about the chances of Mrs Barker's having left her a 'remembrance.' She felt all the time that it was better and wiser not to think about it, if she could only help doing so; and to prepare herself to bear the possible disappointment in a becoming spirit, she kept saying to herself:

'Poor Mrs Barker! I shall miss her very much; but I'm sure I had no claim on her—not the slightest.'

There was a loud ring at the door-bell. This did not startle her, for there were other lodgers in the house; but presently she heard a man's step in the passage, and a voice asking for her, and then she did start, and her face flushed like a young girl's, and as she rose, she trembled with a nervous agitation which would still sometimes overpower her when she chanced to meet unexpectedly the one for whom years ago she used to wait and watch. However, this emotion might only be a sort of echo of the past, for she could check it now as she could not have done then, and though she glanced with a little annoyance at her poor fire and worn dress, she was sufficiently mistress of herself to meet her visitor, when he was shewn into her parlour, with a friendly, composed welcome. Only when Mr Dixon came in, and when she saw in his face a look which struck her as unusual, she grew a little nervous again as she said: 'I hope there's nothing wrong, Robert? Maria and the children are well?' (For what had brought him to call on her at this hour?)

'All quite well, thank you.' He was shaking hands with her as he answered her, and was doing so with a warmth and cordiality which brought the colour back to her face, and a reminiscence of old times to her mind, driving from it the thoughts with which it had been lately occupied. She sat down, but he remained standing by the fire. 'This is a strange time to come to call on you, Priscilla,' he said, after a moment's silence; and the tone of assumed jocularity, for it was quite evidently assumed, made her heart beat quicker. It was a strange time for him to come; his look and manner were strange: something strange was surely going to happen. 'But I thought I had better come and see you this evening myself. I've something to tell you, Priscilla; I thought I would come myself to tell you;' and he turned suddenly as he stood near her, and looked at her with a curious look, which made her grow hot and cold. What was it he had come to say to her?

'Perhaps you guess what it is; perhaps you know what I've come to tell you,' he said abruptly, as he still looked at her in that peculiar way. She did not answer. She had been flushed, and now she became very pale. Was it possible that the long, long deferred hope was coming true at last? People often said that Mr Dixon was sure to marry again. Was the old dream of her youth being renewed, and had he come to ask her to be his wife, to take care of his children, and to manage his house for him, instead of Mrs Lorimer? But why did a feeling more resembling terror than joy seem to come over her as she waited for him to go on speaking? Of course, if he asked her, she would say yes. It could not be possible that she did not know her own mind on that subject, after having had all these years to think about it. Or—was it possible that what she now felt was a fear of, and a shrinking from the very thing which she had once so hopelessly coveted, so vainly sighed for?

But she had not answered his last question. Still, he did not seem surprised at her confused look or at her silence. 'I see,' he said presently; 'this won't be altogether news to you. Well, it will be news to Maria, at anyrate.'

News to Maria! Yes, she had no doubt it would be news to Mrs Lorimer, and not of an agreeable kind. And was she quite sure—the question flashed on her—that the news would be welcomed by herself, as she had fancied it must be? She kept silence, and he went on.

'After all, Priscilla, if you had any notion of this, you might have given us a hint. But perhaps it was more prudent to say nothing about it. Of course'—as he saw her now completely puzzled look—'you guess that I've come to tell you about the will.'

'The will!' and she gave a gasp, of anxiety, as it seemed to him; in reality, of relief. He had come, then, merely to tell her about Mrs Barker's will; perhaps of a legacy to herself; not to make anything like a proposal of marriage! She was relieved—she was certainly married.

'To be sure, the will. Mrs Barker has left you all her money. You have succeeded to forty thousand pounds.'

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Brown was once more alone in her parlour, seated at her table, with the tea-tray and the cold tea-pot before her. Mr Dixon had gone, and she was left to realise to herself as she could the news that he had brought her. Forty thousand pounds! Nobody had ever supposed that Mrs Barker was so rich, though she was known to be well off. And all this money was now hers! This was her legacy! At first she was too awestruck to be actually happy. If she had been left a hundred pounds, she would have been able better to realise and enjoy the idea of such unexpected good-fortune. But forty thousand! She was confounded, awed, half-incredulous. She found herself thinking, in a vacant, absent way, of that additional halfpenny which she would have to pay for her next pound of sugar. Then she remembered how indifferent Mrs Barker had been about the threatened rise in the price of sugar; and so, by degrees, she got to conceive of what was to be her own future immunity from all such petty cares. 'Robert says I shall have fifteen hundred pounds a year,' she thought, and another standard whereby to measure her strange new fate occurred to her. She knew that even Mrs Lorimer had only six hundred a year.

She went to bed mechanically at her usual hour; she got up the next day and went about her frugal daily housekeeping. She was not sure that she had not been dreaming a dream about having been left a fortune. But before the day was far gone, there came to her sufficient confirmation of Mr Dixon's news; and before the evening, she found herself deep in a maze of strange law papers and law phrases, and listening in meek, uncomprehending bewilderment to the talk between the lawyer and Mr Dixon, who had come back to see her, and whose proffered assistance in this, to her, overwhelming embarrassment of riches, she was glad to accept.

Miss Brown proved herself to be a very poor woman of business. They were very patient with her—both the lawyer and the banker—and did their best to make her understand the meaning of the new language which she had to learn; and she was obliged to them for the pains they took to explain things clearly, and very much ashamed of her own stupidity and muddle-headedness, and

of the trouble she was giving them. When Mr Finch, the lawyer, was gone, she tried to apologise to her cousin.

'You see, Robert, I am so ignorant about all these business matters. I am afraid I am very stupid.' Mr Dixon smiled indulgently; and as he looked at her gentle, still sweet face, with its expression of shy helplessness, perhaps some remembrance came to him of the time when he used to take pleasure in being appealed to by his pretty cousin for help or enlightenment in her girlish difficulties.

'You are quite clever enough for a woman, Priscilla,' he said, in what he meant to be a complimentary tone. 'It doesn't do for ladies to be born lawyers. If Mrs Barker, for instance, had trusted more to her lawyer, and less to her own wisdom— But it doesn't signify much now, and it is all the better for you, after all. But, however, I needn't say, Priscilla, that I shall always be delighted to be of any use to you. Don't speak of trouble,' continued Mr Dixon heartily, as Miss Brown again made some apologetic murmur. 'It's no trouble; it's a pleasure to me to do anything for you. Of course you will require a good deal of advice, being, as you say, so unused to these matters; and though Finch is a capital man of business—you couldn't have your affairs in better hands—still, there are many little things that you might like to have a friend's opinion about, and you must apply to me, you know. I'm always at your service. Why, we've been good friends all our lives, you and I, and it would be odd if I weren't ready and happy to be of the least use to you.' And then Mr Dixon looked at his watch, and shook hands cordially with her, and hastened away to his business; not dreaming that he was leaving his cousin just at the moment when he might have been of use to her, and when she really wanted him. But she had taken up so much of his valuable time already, that she did not like to detain him longer, when he seemed in a hurry. After he was gone, however, she sat and tried hard, but hopelessly, to think over and understand all she had been told. There was one thing in particular which she puzzled over in vain perplexity. Mrs Barker had made her own will, instead of employing a lawyer to do it for her. This Miss Brown easily understood was a serious folly and misdemeanour on Mrs Barker's part, and such as she herself would never have dreamed of committing. Still, the will was acknowledged to be a perfectly valid one. What was wrong, then? Why should Mr Finch and Mr Dixon have looked at each other, and said something to one another about a 'previous settlement' and 'natural heirs'? Why should Mr Dixon have said: 'I can explain it all to Miss Brown if she likes, but it makes no difference, you know? It doesn't interfere with the perfect validity of the will, and with her rights.' What was there more to explain? Poor Miss Brown's head was already buzzing with all the explanations she had had to listen to—explanations which seemed to her to explain so little. Was there anything else which she had failed to understand properly?

'I wish Robert could have staid; I would have asked him what it was. Only I am so stupid; I know so little about these things. I wish I were cleverer.'

Robert had said she was quite clever enough for

a woman. She was not sure, though, if she was quite satisfied with the compliment; she was not sure, when she came to think about it, if she wished to be satisfied or not.

TOYS AS TEACHERS.

THE daily occupations of us all, whether we wish it or not, have important and evident influences on our characters and dispositions. This is the case even with the grown-up man possessing vigorous strength of mind and body, for, according as he habituates himself to various occupations or amusements, so invariably is the bent of his mind and the tone of his character influenced. This effect no doubt varies with individuals, and is stronger with some than with others; but the principle remains true, that the so-called trifling events of our daily life, over which we have complete control, have an important effect in moulding our characters.

If this, then, be true with grown-up persons, it is evident that with children, while the mind is in a plastic condition, easily susceptible of impressions, and readily moulded, every occupation and habit must have still greater permanent influence. The little trifles, therefore, on which each child is constantly engaged, and the way the play-hours in the nursery are spent, must assist in forming that child's character.

On this supposition, the use of toys cannot be insignificant, inasmuch as, during many years of infancy, a child's mind dwells on the idea of play and playthings with greater interest and attention than on any other subject. Toys and playing are certainly a necessary part of the child's occupation; and therefore an appreciation of the most advantageous descriptions to suit the characters of different children, and the best way in which such toys may be used, are considerations worthy of the attention and thought of all who are really alive to the importance of the early training of the young. In fact, it is evident that toys must be considered as educational.

In saying that they should be educational, it is not intended that a child is to look upon his play as a lesson; for if he do so, it will altogether cease to be play. Nothing is more painful than to see a child without life and spirits, and that delight in playtime, which is not only natural, but essential to its well-being. It is believed that nothing is worse than to encourage habits of too strict attention to books and lessons during the earliest years of life. If this be done, the bodily health is not kept in full vigour; and although it is possible for some little children of six or seven years to be taught a number of high-sounding subjects, even to be able to repeat strings of facts in geography, such as the lengths of rivers and the heights of mountains, it must be remembered that this is but the temporary addition of atoms to the memory, and is not the healthy development of the mind.

The primary use of toys to children is to keep them occupied. A mother thinks what her infant, even when only a few months old, requires to amuse him, and she selects a bright-coloured bird, or a rattle, or something which it can feel, shake, and look at. An elder child complains of having nothing to do; and a toy or game is found, or a book of pictures or little stories, with which he

may amuse himself. The great aim of all those who understand the bringing-up of children is to keep them constantly engaged, and at the same time, though encouraging them to play as long as possible with one toy, yet to change and vary their occupations and amusements as soon as they shew signs of mental fatigue or weariness. This constant employment is not only desirable for children, but is really essential for them; they must be doing something, and, as has been well remarked, even mischief is but misapplied energy. Toys are the natural instruments on which this energy and activity should be expended. It is the province of the toy-dealer to find objects for the exercise of their minds and fingers, just as much as for the baker to supply them with bread, or the shoemaker with shoes.

Children are essentially active in every sense; and toys cannot properly be called toys at all if they are merely capable of being looked at, and do no more than amuse the eye for a few moments. This fact will often account for the peculiar way in which children take fancies to their toys. Of course the glitter of a new thing, whatever it may be, lasts for some time; but it will be remarked how they generally return to some old plaything, long since bereft of its beauty, because they can do *something with it*. A broken doll, even with no legs and arms, may be dressed and handled as a baby; a horse without legs may be dragged about the floor, and so on; whereas a new picture-book is soon put aside after the novelty of the illustrations is forgotten; and a very elaborate mechanical toy, too delicate even to be handled, is not cared much for after it has been exhibited a few times and has ceased to be a novelty.

While carefully avoiding the mistake of making play a lesson, some few toys, if well selected, may impart a vast amount of instruction, and that without the child having to undergo any undue mental strain. It would, of course, be undesirable to give a little boy five or six years old a direct lesson on the principles of the bridge and the use of the keystone. Give him, however, a box of bricks capable of making a bridge with the centering, and shew him how to put it together: he will puzzle over it for days, try every sort of arrangement, and unwittingly become gradually and practically acquainted with some important mechanical laws. Again, a little model of a steam-engine made to work by gas or spirit, which may be bought for a few shillings, is a most attractive toy. Children will watch it for hours. They see the water poured in; they remark that it is made to boil, and soon has to be replenished; they notice the action of the valves, the piston, the crank, and all the parts. When they come to study the theoretical laws of steam and machines, half the difficulty of their first lessons vanishes. If, during his play, the child is so fortunate as to have a really educated nurse or mother, herself acquainted with the outlines of such general knowledge, the child's play may be made, by simple toys, far more educational and interesting than any set lesson, and the result of the instruction far more fixed on his mind than the simplest theoretical idea could ever be by any number of repetitions and learnings by heart.

What is true concerning the box of bricks and the model engine is also true of a number of other toys; that is, they depend for their

action on certain laws, with which, by a little skill, children may be made practically familiar without any undue taxing of their minds, and during the time they are engaged in play. Of these may be mentioned, the kite, magnetic fish; hydrostatic toys, with water-wells, fountains, &c.; pneumatic toys, such as pop-guns, &c.; tops of all sorts, the kaleidoscope, the magic wheel, &c. All these involve scientific laws which a child may understand familiarly with no more difficulty, if properly put before him, than he usually finds in learning to read.

The feature of the Kindergarten School is that play is really made to a great extent the means of instruction. This idea seems to be capable of greater development than it is at present, even in those excellently conducted institutions. With very young children, particularly in infant schools, the less the instruction partakes of the nature of a regular lesson the better. The importance of early teaching, among the poor especially, is obvious; and yet the evils of straining the mind and over-taxing the energy of very young children, by too rigid a course of training, are most serious. Toys, when carefully selected, seem to supply the means of avoiding the latter evil, and at the same time of securing the early imparting of knowledge.

Reading may be taught entirely by means of the various games and toys with letters and words which are in common use. These toys depend for their interest and attraction on the way they are put before children. With one teacher, they are little better than a dry spelling-book; whereas with another, the finding out of the different letters and the placing them together like a puzzle may interest a child for hours, during which the infant is learning to read and spell in the best possible manner, and in a way he is least likely to forget. The first four rules of arithmetic, again, may be taught almost entirely by means of cube bricks, and a great step made in the formidable multiplication table, before the child is wearied out with the monotonous repetition of what too often seems to him an endless and meaningless list of figures. Writing is the only subject which perhaps requires more direct lesson-work. Even here, however, the 'printing' letters used to teach reading may be copied on a slate, their shape learned, and, what is of still greater importance, the power of holding and guiding a pencil imparted, before the copy-book pot-hook and hanger has made writing an unpleasant and tedious task.

Cookery as a regular subject of instruction in girls' schools has hitherto been looked upon as one of those things which, though no doubt desirable, is unfortunately impossible. Toys, however, seem to prove that this is a mistake. Judging from the collection of cooking-stoves which Mr Cremer has brought together in his International collection of toys in the Exhibition this year, it is clear that 'pretending to cook' is largely played at by children of all countries. These stoves, though in miniature, are made large enough, and are so fitted for gas, as to be capable of dressing a small dinner. It would seem that, by a regular course of instruction in practical play-cooking, a most agreeable and permanently useful *game* might be introduced in all schools, to the immense advantage of all classes.

Not only in direct instruction, however, is the use of toys to be considered educational, but those

playthings to which a child is accustomed have no small influence on his general tone of thought. To those who are naturally over-quiet and studious, those toys should be given which are likely to develop the physical powers, such as a rocking-horse, a cart requiring to be drawn about, a wheelbarrow, a set of gardening tools, a drum, and the like. It would be better to encourage such children to this description of plaything, rather than to allow them constantly to amuse themselves, after the bent of their inclinations, with books, puzzles, and other sedentary amusements. For those full of life, and whom it is impossible to keep still for many minutes at a time, the occasional use of the quieter toys which are to be avoided in the former case is desirable. In France, guns, swords, and miniature war implements are looked upon as almost the only playthings for a boy, and this national taste has undoubtedly had a considerable influence on the national character.

A few words should be said of the doll, which is the most natural and universal toy. It must be owned that the English taste in dolls is better than that of our neighbours on the other side of the Channel. An English doll is almost always an imitation of a child; the French, on the other hand, is a very fashionable young lady, and but too often made to imitate as nearly as may be a class of the community concerning whose ways and style all will agree that little children should be as far removed from, and as little familiarised with as possible. It is true that the French dolls have other uses; they serve first as models of fashion; but what we urge is that children's playthings are in themselves sufficiently important not to be merely out-of-date models of the follies of grown-up persons.

The dressing of dolls may be made a most pleasant mode of teaching a little girl to work. All girls are fond of dressing their own toy-babies, though they soon weary of hemming dusters. By making dolls' clothes exact miniatures of children's garments, so that they will take on and off, agreeable occupation in needlework will be found for a little girl. The child will easily be made to take a pride in having all her doll's wardrobe as neat and well worked as she can; and good habits of care, neatness, and order may thus be inculcated. In this way, as has already been pointed out, play, and useful instruction, and training may be combined through the agency of toys. In watching a little girl play with her doll, an insight may often be obtained into the mode in which the child herself is being brought up. When young, we all imitate more or less the habits and manners of our elders; and in whichever way a child is seen using her doll, whether it be roughly, kindly, or gently, or by making a great fuss over its appearance, such as thinking chiefly of the fashion of its dress and ornaments, so may the characteristic features of the treatment that child herself receives at home be frequently inferred.

The cost of toys cannot be taken as a guide to their usefulness or value. To a certain extent, as in all other articles, it is true that good things cannot be had for nothing, but the most expensive playthings are by no means necessarily the best. Nothing is more desirable than to encourage children as much as possible to make some of their own toys; when they do this, it affords them immense pleasure and amusement. It should

also be borne in mind that the fewer playthings a child has in use at the same time the better. Too many at once encourage restlessness and a continual want of change and variety, and prevent habits of attention and contentment being developed. The art of shewing children how to play to the best advantage, to make toys, and, in short, to enjoy play as much as possible, though natural to some persons, is frequently wanting to a lamentable extent with many nurses, mothers, and teachers. A few practical hints on this subject might and should be included in the course of training given to all teachers, and especially to those who devote themselves to infants.

In conclusion, we assert, that if toys are not turned to the greatest account, the fault lies with us adults, who are not capable of making the most of those means and agents for training our offspring which we find ready to our hands.

MR COWSLIP'S HOLIDAY.

It was in the month of August 18—that the Rev. Charles Cowslip found himself at Coire. It is an old town at the opening of the valley which leads up to the Pass of the Splügen. Heavy rains had made the road almost impassable, and he was glad to break his journey and spend the night in what seemed a pleasant resting-place. He was travelling, poor fellow, for a month's holiday—his first for many years. Sick-chambers with their sad stories, and poverty, which his own narrow means would not permit him to alleviate, were now left far behind. He had been fairly broken down with hard work, and he was at last enjoying a change which he had long needed.

On stepping inside the inn, he was surprised to find no one to welcome him; but, as he heard voices up-stairs, he waited patiently. At length the host appeared, who, perceiving him to be an Englishman, at once exclaimed in his own *patois*: 'Ah, this is lucky. Monsieur is wanted. Step this way.' Mr Cowslip was forthwith conducted to an upper room, in which there lay upon a bed a man in a state of insensibility. The host lost no time in explaining that the sick man was an Englishman—that he had fallen from a cliff, and had seriously hurt himself—that he could only speak English, and, in short, that it was obviously the duty of the new-comer to take the place of nurse to his fellow-countryman. At this moment, a brief return of consciousness enabled the sufferer to enforce the claim; and before Mr Cowslip knew where he was, or what he was doing, he found himself thrust upon a stool by the bedside, which the patient had just sense enough left to prevent his quitting. 'Do not leave me; pray, do not leave me,' he kept repeating. The words were a spell that poor Cowslip's previous training rendered him utterly unable to break. He had scarcely broken his fast in the morning, and he had been jolted all day in the diligence; but whatever his inclinations for food or rest might be, it was clear that he must forego them. There he was; landlord and servants had disappeared. His slightest attempt to move, or even change his position, was checked by the half-imperative, half-querulous appeal: 'Do not leave me.'

At length the sick man fell into a sleep; and as Mr Cowslip was about to seize the opportunity of stealing out of the room to supply at anyrate the

cravings of appetite, a knock came to the door, with a repetition of the phrase: 'Monsieur is wanted.' On descending to the court-yard, he found an agitated, horror-stricken group standing round some object on the ground. They made way for him, and he saw a man, apparently dead or dying, with blood flowing from his head. A pistol had fallen from his hand. He was dead. He had shot himself. Mr Cowslip's presence had been invoked, not from any definite notion of what he might be able to do, but from a general sense of helplessness in the bystanders. Of course he could do nothing except decipher some papers which were found on the deceased, and from which it appeared that his name was Logan. The local authorities were sent for; and Mr Cowslip was only too glad to retire from the scene to his old place up-stairs. Some refreshments were brought to him; and soon, under the soothing influences of food and fatigue, he fell asleep. His slumbers, however, were of short duration. He was awaked by what seemed a familiar voice, saying: 'Monsieur is wanted.' The person wanting Monsieur was this time a young and very pretty girl, Italian by birth, but able to speak a little English. She was weeping bitterly. Her story, broken by sobs (and Italian), was soon told. She knew but too well the state of the patient up-stairs, and she had just heard of the more terrible disaster below. She was herself the unwilling, and indeed unconscious, cause of both.

It is time, however, that we call the sick man by his name, and relate the circumstances which led up to such an unlooked-for situation. His name was Fuller. He had been partner in business with the man who had just shot himself. He and Logan had been friends before they became partners, but, in business as in love, there is seldom a perfect reciprocity of advantage. In the present instance, the friendship and the money had all been on the side of Fuller; Logan's contribution had been wits only. After a short trial of business, Logan had decamped with all the realisable capital, and had been enjoying himself in Italy. It was there, near the Lake of Como, that he had, on a previous business journey, fallen in with the young Italian girl who now 'wanted Monsieur.' He had absconded with his partner's money, in order to be with her, and for more than a year he had been travelling about with her as his wife. It had been in search of his false friend and lost money that Fuller had come abroad. By some information accidentally received, he had been put upon the track, and had pursued it only too successfully, to the scene of our story. In fact he had followed Logan over the Splügen Pass to Coire.

The two had met upon a mountain-path; words, such as we may imagine, had passed between them; there might have been a hasty blow or scuffle; at anyrate, Fuller had been found insensible at the foot of a steep cliff, and been carried to the inn. This was on the evening previous to Mr Cowslip's arrival. It seems that Logan had been seized with remorse at what he had done, and had come to the inn seeking to see Fuller, but had been refused. In sudden desperation, he had shot himself. He had spent all his money; as long as it lasted, he had lived in a reckless, expensive way. He was, in fact, hardly in his right mind, and was unable to foresee the consequences

of his actions, or in any way forecast the future. What his object had been in crossing over to Switzerland did not clearly appear, but the Italian supposed that it was either on some scheme of business, or, more probably, to obtain some money that he had deposited there. Nothing more could be known of his intentions. He was dead.

The poor girl ended her contribution to the above sad story with the passionate entreaty: 'Pray, sir, help me.' Poor Cowslip was no more able to resist such an appeal than the 'Do not leave me' of the patient up-stairs; but before he could go into the details of what was to be done, the landlord again appeared with the old announcement, 'Monsieur is wanted.' Fuller had awakened, and, finding himself alone, and, as he feared, deserted, was uttering loud unintelligible cries. Mr Cowslip was obliged to go back and quiet him, after bidding the young Italian return on the following morning, for it was now towards evening. His head was in a whirl; he seemed to have plunged into the vortex of a perfect Maelstrom of troubles. To drift round under the mysterious influence of the current seemed the only course of proceeding. Once more he took his place on the stool by the bedside. The sick man held him by the hand, and extorted a promise that he would not leave him till his recovery was assured, or, as seemed more probable, death released him from his sufferings. In this uneasy position he passed the night between waking and sleeping. When morning broke, the first sound that recalled him to a sense of the general situation was the now quite familiar and expected phrase, 'Monsieur is wanted.'

'Monsieur' mechanically arose, and, as Fuller was still in a deep sleep, stole out of the room, and went down to the court-yard of the inn. The person who wanted him was the driver of a carriage. It was the *vetturino* who had brought Logan and the Italian from the other side of the Pass. He was clamorous for his money, and had been threatening the poor widowed girl with terrible consequences if she did not find instant means to pay him. It was, in fact, this pressing difficulty which had brought her to Mr Cowslip on the previous evening; and she was now waiting with the *vetturino*, to whom she had spoken of the Englishman as one in whose pity and power to help she had implicit confidence.

It was indeed a hard case. Mr Cowslip's little *viaticum* was scarcely touched. He was not a very calculating person. A Napoleon or two would get rid of one trouble at anyrate. To return to her home was all that the poor girl could now think of as an assuagement of her sorrows. It was speedily agreed that the *vetturino* should take her back as far as his own town of Chiavenna, from whence Mr Cowslip supplied the means of travel to her own home. The *vetturino* was not an unkindly sort of fellow, and he was put into good humour by the payment of his hire, and something handsome for the return journey.

The dead man was buried. He had but the one mourner, whose life he had blasted in reckless pursuit of his own brief pleasure. Then she took her departure up the wildest and most picturesque of Alpine passes. Mr Cowslip once more retired to the sick-room.

Fuller's recovery was slow and fitful. There had been concussion of the brain. Happily, no limbs were broken. A sprained ankle and some

severe bruises were the only bodily injuries he had sustained.

'After a day or two,' said Mr Cowslip, 'I shall be able to leave him, when I have telegraphed to his friends.' It was, however, many days before Fuller's recovery was sufficiently advanced to trouble him with questions about his friends and circumstances. It then appeared that he had but one brother, a clerk or junior partner in a merchant's house. To detail the circumstances by telegraph seemed hardly advisable, so poor Cowslip resigned himself to still a few more days of nursing, and finally wrote a letter requesting to be informed by telegraph what steps should be taken for his patient. An answer was not long coming; it was concise, and to the point: 'My brother is in good hands; pay attention to him.'

Already more than half of Mr Cowslip's holiday had passed away; it would be another week or more before fresh letters could be received and answered. In that time the patient might be moved or left in safety. Letters were written, but no answer came. It was the end of the month before Fuller could be moved; his funds were exhausted; and Mr Cowslip's modest allowance for his holiday had for the most part gone as we have described. At starting, it had been a question whether he should take his sister with him to share the pleasure of the trip; it had, however, been thought more prudent to save the money; for her it would be holiday enough to see her brother return refreshed and strengthened for his next long spell of work. It was well that it had been so determined, for the sum thus set apart was almost all wanted to carry home the sick man and his nurse. They arrived safely, and parted at London Bridge.

'But,' said I to Mr Cowslip, when he told me the story up to this point, 'did you never hear from the brother? Did you not hear how it was that he never wrote, and left you to take such a charge upon you?'

'O yes,' he replied; 'the brothers asked me to meet them at dinner.'

'Well,' I replied, 'they gave you a good dinner, I hope, at any rate?'

'Yes,' answered my guileless friend; 'we dined at the *Green Posts* eating-house in the City, and we had roast veal and greens.'

PHANTOM ARMIES.

On the 29th of January 1719, a Scottish gentleman, named Alexander Jaffray, Laird of Kingswells, was riding across a piece of wide and waste moorland to the westward of Aberdeen, when, about eight o'clock in the morning, he beheld—to his great alarm and bewilderment, as he states in a letter to his friend, Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk (printed by the Spalding Club)—a body of about seven thousand soldiers drawn up in front of him, all under arms, with colours uncased and waving, and the drums slung on the drummers' backs. A clear morning sun was shining, so he saw them distinctly, and also a commander who rode along the line, mounted on a white charger.

Dubious whether to advance or retire, and sorely perplexed as to what mysterious army this was, the worthy Laird of Kingswells and a companion,

an old Scottish soldier, who had served in Low Country wars, reined in their horses, and continued to gaze on this unexpected array for nearly two hours; till suddenly the troops broke into marching order, and departed towards Aberdeen, near which, he adds, 'the hill called the Stockett took them out of sight.'

Nothing more was heard or seen of this phantom force until the 21st of the ensuing October, when upon the same ground—the then open and desolate White-myres—on a fine clear afternoon, when some hundred persons were returning home from the yearly fair at Old Aberdeen, about two thousand infantry, clad in blue uniforms faced with white, and with all their arms shining in the evening sun, were distinctly visible; and after a space, the same commander on the same white charger rode slowly along the shadowy line. Then a long 'wreath of smoke appeared, as if they had fired, but no noise' followed.

To add to the marvel of this scene, the spectators, who, we have said, were numerous, saw many of their friends, who were coming from the fair, pass through this line of impalpable shadows, of which they could see nothing until they came to a certain point upon the moor and looked back to the sloping ground. Then, precisely as before, those phantoms in foreign uniform broke into marching order, and moved towards the Bridge of the Dee. They remained visible, however, for three hours, and only seemed to fade out or melt gradually away as the sun set behind the mountains. 'This will puzzle thy philosophy,' adds the laird at the close of his letter to the baronet of Monymusk; 'but thou needst not doubt of the certainty of either.'

Scottish tradition, and even Scottish history, especially after the Reformation, record many such instances of optical phenomena, which were a source of great terror and amazement to the simple folks of those days; and England was not without her full share of them either; but science finds a ready solution for all such delusions now. They are chiefly peculiar to mountainous districts, and may appear in many shapes and in many numbers, or singly, like the giant of the Brocken, the spectator's own shadow cast on the opposite clouds, and girt with rings of concentric light—or like the wondrous fog-bow, so recently seen from the Matterhorn.

Almost on the same ground where the Laird of Kingswells saw the second army of phantoms, and doubtless resulting from the same natural and atmospheric causes, a similar appearance had been visible on the 12th of February 1643, when a great body of horse and foot appeared as if under arms on the Briggman Hill. Accounted with matchlock, pike, and morion, they looked ghost-like and misty as they skimmed through the gray vapour about eight o'clock in the morning; but on the sun breaking forth from a bank of cloud, they vanished, and the green hill-slopes were left bare, or occupied by sheep alone. Much about the same time, another army was seen to hover in the air over the Moor of Forfar. 'Quhilkis visions,' adds the Commissary Spalding, 'the people thocht to be prodigious tokens, and it fell out owre trew, as may be seen hereafter.'

Many such omens are gravely recorded as preceding and accompanying the long struggle of the Covenant, and the fatal war in which the

three kingdoms were plunged by Charles I. and his evil advisers.

Indigestion, heavy dinners, and heavier drinking, had doubtless much to do in creating some of the spectral delusions of those days; and inborn superstition, together with a heated fancy, were often not wanting as additional accessories. But in the gloomy and stormy autumn that preceded the march of the Scottish Covenanters into England, omens of all kinds teemed to a wonderful extent in the land. When Alister Macdonnell, son of Coll the Devastator, as the Whigs named him, landed from Ireland, at the Rhin of Ardnamurchan, in Morven, to join the Scottish cavaliers under the Marquis of Montrose, then in arms for the king, it was alleged that the hum of cannon-shot was heard in the air, passing all over Scotland from the Atlantic to the German Sea; that many strange lights appeared in the firmament; and that, on a gloomy night in the winter of 1650, a spectre drummer, beating in succession the Scottish and English marches, summoned to a ghostly conference, at the castle-gate of Edinburgh, Colonel Dundas of that ilk, a corrupt officer, who, on being bribed by gold, afterwards surrendered to Cromwell the fortress, together with some sixty pieces of cannon.

All the private diaries and quaint chronicles, of late years published by the various literary clubs in England and Scotland, teem with such marvels, but the latter country was more particularly afflicted by them; omens, warnings, and predictions of coming peril rendering it, by their number and character, extremely doubtful whether Heaven or the other place was most interested in Scottish affairs.

In 1638, fairy drums were heard beating on the hills of Dun Echt, in Aberdeenshire, according to the narrative of the parson of Rothiemay; in 1643, we hear of the noise of drums 'and apparitions of armies' at Bankafair in the same county. 'The wraith of General Leslie in his buff-coat and on horseback, carrying his own banner with its bend azure and three buckles or, appeared on the summit of a tower at St Johnstown. Science now explains such visions as the aerial Morgana, produced by the reflection of real objects on a peculiar atmospheric arrangement; but then they were a source of unlimited terror.' Low, in his *Memorials*, records that, in 1676, a wondrous star blazed at noon on the hill of Gargunnoch, and a great army of spectres was seen to glide along the hills near Aberdeen.

A folio of *Apparitions and Wonders*, preserved in the British Museum, records that, at Durham, on the 27th September 1703, when the evening sky was serene and full of stars, a strange and prodigious light spread over its north-western quarter, as if the sun itself was shining; then came streamers which turned to armed men ranked on horseback. J. Edmonson, the writer of the broadsheet, adds: 'It was thought they would see the apparition better in Scotland, because it appeared a great way north; the same,' he continues gravely, 'was seen in the latter end of March 1704,' and the battle of Hochstadt followed it. This must refer to the second battle fought there, which we call Blenheim, when Marshal Tallard was defeated and taken prisoner by Marlborough. But this wonderful light which turned to armed men at Durham was outdone by a marvel at Churchill, Oxfordshire, where (in the

same collection) we find that, on the 9th January 1705, four suns were all visible in the air at once, 'sent for signs unto mankind,' adds the publisher, Mr Tookey of St Christopher's Court, 'and having their significations of the Lord, like the hand-writing unto his servant Daniel.'

In 1744, a man named D. Stricket, when servant to Mr Lancaster of Blakehills, saw one evening, about seven o'clock, a troop of horse riding leisurely along Souther Fell in Cumberland. They were in close ranks, and ere long quickened their pace. As this man had been sharply ridiculed as the solitary beholder of a spectre horseman in the same place in the preceding year, he watched these strange troopers for some time ere he summoned his master from the house to look too. But ere Stricket spoke of what was to be seen, 'Mr Lancaster discovered the aerial troopers,' whose appearance was as plainly visible to him as to his servant. 'These visionary horsemen seemed to come from the lowest part of Souther Fell, and became visible at a place named Knott; they moved in successive troops (or squadrons) along the side of the Fell till they came opposite to Blakehills, where they went over the mountain. They thus described a kind of curvilinear path, their first and last appearances being bounded by the mountain.' They were two hours in sight; and 'this phenomenon was seen by every person (twenty-six in number) in every cottage within the distance of a mile,' according to the statement attested before a magistrate by Lancaster and Stricket, on the 21st of July 1745.

During the middle of the last century, a toll-keeper in Perthshire affirmed on oath, before certain justices of the peace, that an entire regiment passed through his toll-gate at midnight; but as no such force had left any town in the neighbourhood, or arrived at any other, or, in fact, were ever seen anywhere but at his particular turnpike, the whole story was naturally treated as a delusion; though the Highlanders sought in some way to connect the vision with the unquiet spirits of those who fought at Culloden, for there, the peasantry aver, that 'in the soft twilight of the summer evening, solitary wayfarers, when passing near the burial mounds, have suddenly found themselves amid the smoke and hurly-burly of a battle, and could recognise the various clans engaged by their tartans and badges. On those occasions, a certain Laird of Culduthil was always seen amid the fray on a white horse, and the people believe that once again a great battle will be fought there by the clans; but with whom, or about what, no seer has ventured to predict.'

Shadowy figures of armed men were seen in Stockton Forest, Yorkshire, prior to the war with France, as the *Leeds Mercury* and local prints record; and so lately as 1812, much curiosity and no small ridicule were excited by the alleged appearance of a phantom army in the vicinity of hard-working prosaic Leeds, and all the newspapers and magazines of the time shew how much the story amused the sceptical, and occupied the attention of the scientific.

It would appear that between seven and eight o'clock on the evening of Sunday the 28th October, Mr Anthony Jackson, a farmer, in his forty-fifth year, and a lad of fifteen, named Turner, were overlooking their cattle, which were at grass in Havarah Park, near Ripley, the seat of Sir John

Ingilley, when the lad suddenly exclaimed: 'Look, Anthony; what a number of beasts!' 'Beasts? Lord bless us!' replied the farmer with fear and wonder, 'they are men!' And, as he spoke, there immediately became visible 'an army of soldiers dressed in white uniforms, and in the centre a personage of commanding aspect clad in scarlet.' These phantoms (according to the *Leeds Mercury* and *Edinburgh Annual Register*) were four deep, extended over thirty acres, and performed many evolutions. Other bodies in dark uniforms now appeared, and smoke, as if from artillery, rolled over the grass of the park. On this, Jackson and Turner, thinking they had seen quite enough, turned and fled.

Like the spells of the Fairy Morgana, which were alleged to create such beautiful effects in the Bay of Reggio, and which Fra Antonio Minasi saw thrice in 1773, and 'deemed to exceed by far the most beautiful theatrical exhibition in the world,' science has explained away, or fully discovered the true source of all such spectral phenomena. The northern aurora was deemed by the superstitious, from the days of Plutarch even to those of the sage Sir Richard Baker, as portentous of dire events; and the fancies of the timid saw only war and battle in the shining streamers; but those supposed spectral armies whose appearance we have noted, were something more, in most instances, than mere *deceptio visus*, being actually the shadows of realities—the airy reproductions of events, bodily passing in other parts of the country, reflected in the clouds, and imaged again on the mountain slopes or elsewhere, by a peculiar operation of the sun's rays.

CECIL'S TRYST.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE SICK-ROOM.

THE next morning, my father did not take his usual place at breakfast; and my aunt herself came down later than was her wont. I noticed that she held a letter in her hand, though it was before the usual post-time, and was looking very grave.

'What is the matter?' inquired I, with apprehension. 'There is no bad news of Cecil, I hope?'

'No, dear; nor any bad news at all, please God. But your father is rather indisposed this morning, and—this is a letter he wishes you to take to Monkton.'

'For the doctor?' cried I, starting to my feet. 'He must be ill, then.'

'No, not for the doctor.' I had my fingers on the door-handle, when Aunt Ben seized my arm. 'You must not go up-stairs. He has forbidden it. You are to take that letter to Canon Browne.'

'To Canon Browne?' exclaimed I, with amazement. 'Well, so I will, but not before I have seen my father. I am sure he is ill; I am certain of it by your face.'

My aunt burst into tears.

'He is ill, Fred. I believe he has got the fever. I have been up with him since two this morning.'

'Good God! while I have been dreaming of my own plans and pleasures! Has the doctor been sent for?'

'Hours ago. Everything has been done that can be done.'

A bitter sense of my own selfishness pervaded me, and I groaned aloud.

'It is through no neglect of yours, Fred, nor of anybody's,' said Aunt Ben gravely, 'save of him who has let things come to such a pass in the cottages. But the truth is, the whole place is plague-smitten. Your father has written to his old friend the canon, beseeching him to take you in at Monkton for a week or two, and you are to start at once. I will see to packing up your things.'

'What?' cried I indignantly. 'I am to go and enjoy myself, while you are all sick and dying here!'

'I have given you your father's message, Fred,' said my aunt quietly, but she trembled both in speech and limb.

'And you think I ought to obey it, do you?' demanded I. 'You and he have your duties, it seems, and Eleanor and the rector—and even old Mr Bourne, although he neglects them—but I have nothing to consult but my own safety. Is that your opinion, Aunt Ben? You love me well, I know, but your love does not surely blind you so to what is right for me to do, as to suggest such conduct?'

'I promised to do your father's bidding, Fred, and I have done it,' said my aunt with a sigh of relief, and withdrawing herself from the door. 'If you decline to obey it, I must say that in this matter I cannot blame you.'

She held out her arms, and kissed me fondly.

'I knew you would not leave him, Fred,' sobbed she; 'I told him so. Go up, and tend him, and may God preserve you both to one another!'

I have often wondered whether it would not be a good plan—though, of course, a very 'ridiculous,' 'Quixotic,' and 'impracticable' one—to include in our present course of education, even if it should curtail it a little in other respects (such as Greek verse and conchology), one or two simple subjects the knowledge of which might make us useful to our fellow-creatures. For instance, since neither good birth nor wealth can debar those very vulgar visitors, Disease and Death, from making an occasional call, why should we not all be in some measure prepared for their reception? When our nearest and dearest are struck down by sickness, why should we be so ignorant of what is necessary to be done, as to be obliged to leave everything—even in the way of mere tendance—to hireling hands, or learn our duties at the expense of the patient? How gladly, if we could, would we minister to him, and smooth his pillow with our loving hands; but the consciousness of our incompetence forbids it. It is not that the calamity unmans us, but that being something wholly out of our experience, we stand useless and agape at it. Our presence, which might have been so helpful as well as consolatory, is better dispensed with; our room is wanted for others who have aid to give; and we are 'in the way.' A coming in on tiptoe, often at undesirable times, to see our dear one; a hushed inquiry of his mercenary ally, the nurse, as to his progress; and a kiss of his forehead, or pressure of his hot hand, at morn and eve, are all the assistance we can offer to him.

It is true that women (all at least who are worthy to be called such) have more or less of this gift of ministering to the sick bestowed on them by nature; but men have no such dower, and how often is it, that, afar from country and from home, men fall sick among men only! In the upper classes of England, it is not too much to say, that

more men would be found qualified to doctor a sick horse than to nurse a sick man.

The miserable failures that I myself made as an attendant at my dear father's bedside haunt me still, though, in the end, since there was plenty of time in which to learn, I succeeded in making myself useful. Unluckily, from the very first, he loved to receive his medicine and be turned on his uneasy pillow by my hands; to speak into my longing ears the broken words I could often not interpret; and, when at his worst, to be read to by my voice—most trying task of all, since, unaccustomed as I was to control my feelings, it would break down, choked with sobs.

Never shall I forget that first morning when I entered his sick-room—without my shoes, for fear my clumsy footsteps should disturb him—and gazed upon him as he lay with eyes half-closed, and cheeks that, by contrast with the white sheets, looked crimson. What thoughts passed through my brain of Death and Eternal Parting, and the house without its head! What self-reproaches for not having valued at his worth the friend and father whom I might now lose for ever! As I inadvertently stirred the curtain, my father, thinking it was Aunt Ben returned, murmured anxiously: 'Is he gone? Is Fred gone?'

'No, sir; I am here,' said I. 'Do not be vexed; I am come to nurse you. If, as you said, Eleanor's place was beside her father's pillow, surely mine is also there.' I took the hand he would have drawn away, and kissed him. Then I knew that it would be too late to send me away, since, if I was to take harm, the mischief would be already done; and I should be unsafe to be received elsewhere.

'My boy, my boy!' he murmured mournfully, but not reproachfully; and then such a contented smile came over his noble face that I felt my presence was a joy to him after all.

This 'Gatcombe fever,' as it was subsequently called in the neighbourhood, was almost as virulent and rapid in doing its evil work as the Plague itself. The heat of the weather, which was excessive, doubtless aided it; and the insufficient drainage, and neglect of all sorts in the village, was as fuel to its fire. Whenever, through the open windows of the sick-room, came the tolling of the church bell, as it did daily, my father would inquire calmly: 'Who is it, Fred?' and his words went to my heart like another knell. A new aspect of life had unfolded itself to me. Instead of amusements, and studies that were themselves amusement, completing the whole round of my existence, I was now brought face to face with the expectation of death. We talk of the ignorance of the rich as to the ways of the poor, and truly it is great and terrible, but not more complete than that of the sound with respect to the thoughts of the sick. It is good for us to have knowledge upon both points. The affairs of the world assume their just proportions only when we are leaving it, or are watching others leave it. What does this and that matter, which was so important yesterday, to him who is going beyond the stars to-morrow! or to us who are bidding him good-bye, and feel that we shall rejoin him there so shortly!

These ideas, however, did not affect me much at first. My father was always cheerful in his manner; and if he shewed any apprehension of his illness having a fatal result, it was only in increased affection for those about him.

'If you want to see an angel before you go to heaven,' said he, speaking of my aunt, 'watch a good woman in a sick-room.'

Aunt Ben made no noise with her wings; she never 'broke down' as to her feelings; she forgot nothing that should be remembered; she introduced no topic that would have been out of place. The doctor and she had long conferences together with closed doors; but, no matter what she had heard, whenever she re-entered my father's room, it was with unruffled features; if she wept, she used some elixir for red eyes. On one day only, the first on which my father began to talk of his brother Thomas as though he were alive, did I see any change in her; she turned pale to her very lips, and confided to me that it always 'gave her a turn' to hear people talk when delicious. I afterwards discovered, however, that the doctor had previously informed her that if my father should lose his senses it would be a bad sign. His memory did not fail him even at this pass. I heard him once repeat half-a-dozen verses of Byrom's *Careless Content*—the poem he liked best of all poems, save those of the Elizabethan era—though he imagined himself to be in Monkton Cathedral, repeating the responses.

*With good and gentle-humoured hearts
I choose to chat where'er I come,
Whate'er the subject be that starts;
But if I get among the glum,
I hold my tongue to tell the truth,
And keep my breath to cool my broth.*

*Of ups and downs, of ins and outs,
Of they're & the wrong, and we're & the right,
I shun the rancours and the routs;
And wishing well to every wight,
Whatever turn the matter takes,
I deem it all but ducks and drakes.*

*I love my neighbour as myself,
Myself like him too, by his leave;
Nor to his pleasure, power, or pelf,
Come I to crouch, as I conceive:
Dane Nature doubtless has designed
A man the monarch of his mind.*

My father never wholly lost that monarchy, but, after a temporary abdication of it, would reassume it, and become himself again; then he would pray with us, and for us, using grand old prayers, such as Taylor's or Sir Thomas More's. But for the most part he lay as one who had long made his peace with God, and had leisure to concern himself with the affairs of those he loved.

'When I am gone, Fred—if I do go—you and Aunt Ben must not part.'

This I most readily promised.

Then he asked to see Eleanor (this was after he been ill for weeks); and she came accordingly, in black, for the rector had died on the third day of his seizure—a fact, however, which we had kept from my father's knowledge. I had not seen her, though Aunt Ben had done so, because of the word that I had given that I would not pass the gates, notwithstanding there was, of course, no danger now to be incurred that was not risked already. Every wish of my father's was become sacred.

We met in the drawing-room, and embraced one another in Aunt Ben's presence, without the least embarrassment; though my heart was so sad, it

never held her dearer than at that moment, when I seemed not only her lover but her brother.

My aunt dressed her in some coloured clothes belonging to Jane before she went into the sick-room, and she wore as cheerful a countenance as she could assume. But, as it happened, all our pains were needless; for my father, desiring to see her alone, she told him the whole truth, being, as she said, unable to do otherwise, at which I did not wonder. He commended me to her, as she told me long afterwards, in the most tender terms, and blessed her as his future daughter-in-law.

To me, when she had departed, he repeated those exquisite lines of Middleton:

*'The treasures of the deep are not so precious
As are the concealed comforts of a man
Locked up in woman's love. I scent the air
Of blessings when I come but near the house.
What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!
The violet bed's not sweeter!'*

Your Eleanor is a true pearl, Fred. Oh, never leave her for a counterfeit!

*Base Passion,
With all her powders, paintings, and best pride,
Is but a fair house built by a ditch-side.'*

It was not worth while at such a time to speak of the obstacles which I foresaw would be opposed to our union, and, besides, his confidence in the matter gave me hope.

That was the last day on which my father was thoroughly himself. His mind now mingled past with present in sad confusion. He spoke again of my uncle Thomas, but this time as if he had been accused of Richard Waller's death. 'A shameful thing!' he murmured. 'No Wray could do it. Well, well, I shall know all from him.'

'From whom, father?' inquired I.

'From Batty, lad. I am going to see poor Batty. Why not?'

When he was almost at the last, we pressed the doctor to stay on with us, which he did; the Gatecombe fever having by this time burned itself out, like some raging prairie-fire, and thus left him some leisure; else my father would never permit him to pay a longer visit than he imagined his own case to demand.

'Can nothing more be done?' inquired my aunt, in a despairing whisper.

'Nothing, but what we are doing, madam; the case is, alas! beyond all remedy.'

Never shall I forget how the voice of the dying man, whom we had thought comatose, electrified us, as it broke in with this reply:

*'No, no; the remedy
Must be a winding-sheet, a fold of lead,
And some untrod-on corner of the earth.'*

Then he went on from the same old play of Ford's:

*'I have left me
But one poor jewel to bequeath: my Fame,
By scandal yet untouched; this I bequeath
To Memory and Time's old daughter, Truth;
If ever my unhappy name find mention
When I am fallen to dust, may it deserve
Besecming charity without dishonour.'*

These words, expressed with infinite pathos, though in weak and faltering tones, were my father's last. He had his wish. No man of his race or place ever died more beloved, or left a

memory more unstained behind him. An enormous concourse of persons of all ranks attended his funeral, notwithstanding the danger of coming to our decimated village, and especially on such an errand. Of all our immediate neighbours, Mr Bourne alone made himself conspicuous by his absence; in any other man, an excuse would have offered itself in the fact of his own recent bereavement, but it was evident that he did not wish excuse to be made for him, for he shewed himself ostentatiously elsewhere.

CHAPTER XX.—I ASK GRANDPAPA.

At first, I was so filled with the sense of my great loss, that there was no room for any other feeling: what old Mr Bourne might think or do, was absolutely without interest to me. The Manor-house seemed like a vault, and though the summer grew and glowed about it, all was with me as faded autumn. My father's study, where I had listened to his wise words a thousand times, and never heard a hasty one, was become a holy place; for the first time I began to understand the reverence which attaches to mere sacred things. The chair in which he had been wont to sit at dinner-time was put aside; I could not use it. His favourite books were become solemn scriptures, and the quotations so familiar to his lips as hallowed texts.

As regards all that related to my father personally, indeed, it has never been otherwise; the link of love between us, by the miracle that only Love can work, has lengthened without growing weaker; but as time went on, I found myself looking less and less within myself, and more and more upon the world without. The want of occupation began to make itself felt, and the need of something to supply, however inadequately, the noble companionship I had lost for ever. Aunt Ben was all she could be to me, and far more than I deserved; but my heart yearned for consolation of another sort, and it was denied me. Not only was Eleanor forbidden by her grandfather to visit us on any pretence, but to converse with me if we chanced to meet. I often saw her at a distance, haunting the spots where we had been wont to be so happy together years ago; but I did not dare approach her, lest I should draw down upon her the old man's wrath; for, orphaned like myself, she had no comforter at home, as I had in Aunt Ben, but only the society of this crabbed relative, who had power to make her life even more wearisome and sombre than it was, through his ill-humour. How strange it seemed that my father, whom all loved, and whose existence was a joy to others, should have been taken from the world he brightened, while this old withered wretch, who had wrought nought but harm, should be left in it, standing not only between me and Eleanor, but between all men and the sun! For his influence was that of an evil spirit, unhappy in himself, and hating to see others happy. Fear and Hate were the demons that sprung up at his footstep; and if the lips of Subservience wished him 'good-morrow,' in her heart she wished him dead.

'Well, he is old,' thought I, 'and must needs die soon, and in the meantime patience!' But it is not so easy to practise that virtue as to talk about it; and when I reflected how much less easy it was for Nelly to practise it than for me, I felt

very bitter against the old man. This was but natural, perhaps; but beside my strong personal feeling toward Eleanor, the recollection that my father had expressed his wish that we should be united, weighed with me very powerfully; and I looked upon 'the Alchemist' as a rebel against an authority that was to me almost divine.

This was most unreasonable, I own.

Many weary months had thus passed by, when a second letter arrived from Cecil, written from South America, and full of his first impressions of its wondrous scenery. He represented all things as brightly as he could; but it was clear to me, by the feverish eagerness he expressed for news from home, that no change of scene would give him any genuine pleasure while Batty's statement remained undisproved. There were many affectionate messages (that touched me to the heart) for an ear that was deaf for ever, and, in addition, a curious native account of the origin of crocodiles' tears, which he thought would tickle my father's sense of humour. 'These creatures having devoured a man, find themselves unable to swallow the head; and taking it to a solitary spot, they are accustomed to bewail their inability to conclude their meal with tears.' Then immediately afterwards, though the proximity was certainly not due to any association of ideas in the writer's mind, occurred these words: 'Dear Jane bids me send her love to all at Gatcombe. How selfish it is in me to have carried her away from home and friends, that she never ceases to bewail, I know, though she does her best, for my sake, to hide her tears!'

'The poor thing can't swallow our heads,' exclaimed Aunt Ben, as I read this out; at which we laughed together, the first laugh that had been heard in the old house for many a day.

Cecil made no allusion to Ruth, but a letter was enclosed to her as before, which I was obliged to put aside with the other one. How strange it seemed that she had not confided to either of us whether she was going! My cousin's communication ended with renewed expressions of tender affection for us all, and a kindly message for Nelly. 'Have you asked papa,' inquired he, 'and grand-papa?' I should indeed be glad to hear that your happiness was assured, even if the fulfilment of it should not be for the present, not only upon your own account, dear Fred., but on another's. I fear there is still some hope in a quarter where I grieve to see it. In fact, the news that your engagement had been acknowledged would be to me only less welcome than that other piece of intelligence, for which I pant as the hart for the water-brooks.'

I could not give this letter into my aunt's hands because of its allusion to Jane's misplaced affection for myself; but when I had read the rest of it aloud, she observed: 'Dear Cecil is a curious mixture, so wayward and impulsive in his own affairs, and wise and sensible when thinking for others.'

'Do you think his advice is good as respects Nelly, aunt?'

'Unquestionably, Fred,' she answered. 'I was only waiting for an opportunity to suggest it to you myself. It is quite impossible that you can live on at Gatcombe in this way; you will be moped to death; and before you leave it, it is only right that you should understand your exact position with respect to dear Eleanor. Mr Bourne is bound to express himself clearly upon that point,

and the sooner you come to an understanding the better. I am quite sure that her poor father was in favour of your union, a fact which, at all events, will prevent that wretched old man from talking about the duty of obedience. He is *such* a canter! I sometimes wonder whether any people do talk about duties except those that habitually neglect them.'

Since the outbreak of the fever, that 'wretched old man' was more abhorrent to my aunt than ever, though I never heard her directly accuse him of having been its cause; perhaps she was too charitable to do so, and perhaps her religious opinions were of a nature to attach the sense of 'visitation' to such calamities, rather than to account for them in a material way. Her present bitterness, as I suspected, arose from the consideration that the Alchemist would oppose himself to my projected proposal to the uttermost; and I asked her frankly whether such was her opinion.

'I scarcely know what to say, Fred,' she replied. 'The old man, like all *parvenus*, is doubtless desirous of an alliance for his grand-daughter with a family of position and good blood: he would not mind—not much, at least—the want of means in such a *parti*. I even think that at one time he did not look unfavourably upon your own intimacy at the Rectory. But the unhappy circumstances connected with poor Batty have undoubtedly embittered him against us. He can't refuse you an interview, of course, but you must be very careful how you play your cards. In any event, you must not quarrel with him, for Eleanor's sake.'

'Of course not,' said I indignantly. 'Why should I quarrel, when, whether he says "Yes" or "No," will not affect our future in the least, except so far, I suppose, as his filthy money goes.'

'Yes, but you mustn't tell him *that*, my dear Fred., but, on the contrary, be very submissive and conciliatory; and you must not talk of money as "filthy," because it is with him a very sacred thing. You will have to lay before him the state of your own affairs, with which, of course, added my aunt dryly, 'you are fully acquainted.'

'I am not quite sure that I am,' said I with hesitation.

'I am quite sure that you are *not*, you silly boy,' was Aunt Ben's rejoinder. 'When your father's will was read, I doubt whether you heard three words of it. Well, you have no fortune, of course, to be called such, but still enough to live upon in a quiet way: the Manor-house and what land is left about it are of considerable value, and will have a fancy price in the old man's eyes, who has so long been hankering after them. You can point out to him how complete the Gatcombe estate would be made by an alliance between the heir of the old race and the daughter of the new; but don't be too romantic, Fred; I would not advise you to try poetry, because I don't think he's fond of it.'

She spoke quite seriously, and I said: 'Thank you, aunt. I should have thought Mr Bourne was just the sort of person to delight in music, poetry, painting, and the fine arts; but I bow to your better judgment.'

'You may laugh, my dear,' returned she good-humouredly; 'but my belief is that I could manage this affair much better than you; however, I suppose that wouldn't be quite business-like.'

'I am afraid not,' said I doubtfully; 'or else I am sure I should be delighted to have you for my

advocate, and indeed to have a much less efficient proxy. I do so very much dislike that old gentleman! "Hang him, Rook," as my poor father used to say.

'Yes, but you must forget all that when you are talking to him. Think of Eleanor, and that will bring a pleasant expression into your features. —By-the-bye, Fred., when speaking of your own affairs, you will not omit, of course, to mention your expectations.'

'Expectations! What expectations?'

'Well, my dear, the word speaks for itself. God forbid that anything should happen to Cecil; but I suppose no contingencies ought to be left out when dealing with these matters, and especially with an old schemer like Mr Bourne. You are your cousin's heir-presumptive, remember.'

'My dear aunt,' exclaimed I reprovingly, 'I am astonished at you: nothing could induce me to hint at such a thing to Mr Bourne, and indeed the idea has never entered my own mind.'

'So I supposed, and that is why I mentioned it,' observed Aunt Ben coolly. 'However, whether you hint at it or not, it is quite certain that Mr Bourne will not forget the fact; so it does not much matter.'

The opinion which my aunt had passed on Cecil, that he was impulsive in his own affairs, but thoughtful for others, might, in fact, with a little modification, have been applied to herself. She was disinterested and unselfish, even to excess; but when her advice was sought by those she loved, she was eminently shrewd and practical; nor is such inconsistency uncommon, especially in the female sex.

The very next morning after this council of war (and love), I put a bold face upon a beating heart, and walked up to the Rectory. The new clergyman, a young bachelor, had been glad to let the house for a consideration, and lived in lodgings in the village, while Mr Bourne and Eleanor retained their old home. It was a pretty little house, overgrown with jasmine and honeysuckle, the scent of which, as I think of that visit, is fragrant still. I did not dare look up at the window, lest the sight of Eleanor should disturb my equanimity, but like an eager dog, kept my eyes fixed downcast on the door.

'Is Mr Bourne at'—I had begun, before I perceived that it was the old gentleman himself who had opened it to me. I think he enjoyed my confusion thereupon, though he never evinced any sign of enjoyment beyond a momentary stretching of the lips, which instantly returned to their due limits, like an india-rubber band. He was very tall, but stooped a good deal, and carried his head on one side, like a cunning fox as he was. His hair was white as snow, but so it had been for years, and his face had a fresh brown colour, which boded length of days.

'To what am I indebted for this visit, young sir?' said he, looking through and through me with his keen black eyes, the only attribute his granddaughter and he had in common. 'I thought I had let you know you were not welcome here; but being lord of the manor, perhaps you imagine you have a right to come where you please.'

He spoke with mocking severity, and in allusion, as I well understood, to some disagreement which my father and he had had long ago respecting a right of way. I felt such an allusion to be not

only in the worst taste, but to signify a hostile attitude; but I thought of Eleanor and smiled.

'I wish to have a few minutes' private conversation with you, Mr Bourne,' said I.

He led the way into his business-room—a bare parchment-littered apartment, which by no stretch of courtesy could have been termed a study—closed the door, and without asking me to sit down, wheeled about and exclaimed: 'Well, what is it?'

How lightly Time and Loss affect some men! Here was one who had reached the threescore years and ten allotted to mortals, and had just seen his only son drop into the grave, the victim, in part, of his own neglect; and yet, but for his white hairs and his black clothes, there was nothing to proclaim either fact. The harshness of every feature remained unsoftened; the fire of his eye unquenched; his voice alone had that querulous tone which speaks of age, and even that had less of querulousness in it than of downright suspicion.

'I am come, sir, to speak to you about Eleanor.'

'So I suspected, young gentleman,' returned he grimly, and regarding me with great disfavour. 'I cannot prevent your speaking of her, but I will take care that you never speak to her—you may take your oath of that.'

'May I ask you why, sir?'

'You may ask, of course; whether I shall answer or not is another matter. I will tell you this much, however, that if you think you are a great man because that tumble-down old house and a few acres of cottage-garden are now your own, you are much mistaken.'

'I don't consider myself a great man, Mr Bourne,' said I quietly; 'but I am a gentleman, I hope, and though not rich, I am not without independent means. There is nothing incongruous, I should suppose, or at least not so much so that it cannot be listened to, in my proposing for your granddaughter's hand. Her father, your son, was, as she will tell you, by no means averse to the prospect of my being her suitor. Of course, I am not speaking of anything immediate. We are both very young, and I have to make my way in the world. All we ask of you at present is to give us leave to meet occasionally, to correspond, and, in short, to be engaged to one another.'

'Very reasonable indeed, I'm sure!' observed the old man in mocking tones. 'It is very modest of you not to insist upon being married to-morrow, and on my allowing you five thousand a year! You say that my son was not averse to this little scheme: I daresay, now, that your own father was in favour of it?'

'He was, sir. He had a very high regard for Eleanor, and thought I should be most fortunate if I could win such a wife.'

'And doubtless you think so too, young gentleman?'

'Indeed, I do, sir. I know very well that I am not worthy of her. As to her fortune'—

'That's right—now we are coming to it,' sneered the old fellow, rubbing his hands, and inclining his ear towards me with much politeness. 'Her eighty thousand pounds or so? Well, what of that?'

'I don't want her fortune, sir, if you will only give me Eleanor.'

'And do you really mean to say that you are come up here to try such a stale device and sorry falsehood upon me?' exclaimed the old man angrily.

'Your taste—inherited, I believe—for play-acting or play-writing—it's all one—must be indeed a ruling passion. Now hear me once for all. If you ever marry my grand-daughter, you will wed a beggar, for not a shilling—as your wife—shall she ever have of mine. To some folks, one would say: "That is enough;" but you, forsooth—you Wrays—are careless about fortunes; lose them, spend them, and then affect to despise riches. Your father did so, and perhaps you may be like him; but though such high and mighty indifference—whether feigned or genuine, it matters not—be doubtless a fine thing, it is not so fine, remember, to make *others* poor (who may not possess such philosophy), in order to gratify your private vanity. You have no right, I say, to make a simple, ignorant girl blind to her own advantage, and sacrifice great prospects to your selfish pleasure.'

As he said these words he watched my face like a ferret, and I suppose it betrayed some chagrin; for I had not expected him to take this line of argument, which certainly was not without its weight. 'No, young man,' he went on in milder tones, 'we have all our duty to perform in this world, and our inclinations must submit to it. I will do you the justice to say that I do not believe you so devoid of principle as to strive to win my grand-daughter in direct opposition to my wishes.'

I had not understood until that moment what my aunt had meant by calling Mr Bourne 'a canter;' he had never as yet had any necessity in my case to use the phrases of morality which he employed with my elders, when defending his own meanness, or advocating harsh enactments with respect to the poor; but I felt now as if I was being sprinkled with holy water by the devil, and with some difficulty restrained myself from saying so.

'So far as the principle of which you speak is concerned in this matter, Mr Bourne,' said I quietly, 'I must frankly tell you that the approval of Eleanor's father is quite sufficient for me, though, of course, if I could gain your consent'—

'Which you never will gain,' interrupted the old man coldly. 'Let me frankly tell you that, young jackanapes. If it comes to frankness, indeed, I may say that there was a day when I might have answered you otherwise, and that you have nobody to thank for your present disappointment but your own father. When next you think of his high-mindedness, independence of spirit, generosity, and all the rest of it, you may think of that also, for your comfort.'

It is impossible to describe in words the malice of the speaker's tone, or the antipathy which his sneering features expressed towards me.

'It will be my comfort to think,' said I, looking at him steadily, 'that not even to secure my happiness could my father be tempted to commit a baseness.'

There was a moment when I thought the old man would have struck me, so terrible was the passion in his face at this allusion to his attempt to burk inquiry into Batty's case; but he curbed himself, and, in a half-smothered voice, inquired: 'Have you anything else to say, young gentleman, before we part, since this will be your last chance to say it?'

'Yes,' said I; 'I must be permitted to remark, that what you have just said with reference to my father, convinces me that your objection to my

suit is founded, not on the grounds you would have had me believe—my insufficiency of fortune—but on hereditary dislike. My dead father did you what you choose to imagine a wrong, and you revenge yourself upon his son. That is cowardly and infamous!'

'You lie!' cried the old man, trembling with rage. 'I always hated you, the whole lot of you, for your pride and stubbornness, that is true; but you are proud and stubborn, and a beggar as well; and my grandchild is meat for your master. The proudest family in England might be proud of her, ay, and the richest. Let her marry whom she will but you—but you—and she is my heiress; let her marry you, and she shall inherit nothing but my curse! Now, go.' Here he led the way into the hall. 'You have my answer, Pauper Wray.'

Something in this depreciatory epithet, of the application of which he was obviously very proud, for he continued to repeat it—'Pauper Wray, Pauper Wray'—as he stood, with mock-politeness, with his hand on the outer door, reminded me of what my aunt had mentioned concerning the possibility of my succeeding to my cousin's wealth; I paused, therefore, upon the threshold, to observe: 'I am no pauper, Mr Bourne; but your constant harping on that word suggests to me that, notwithstanding your antipathy to my race, you might not have been so obdurate, had Cecil, instead of his poor cousin, come to woo your grand-daughter.'

'Cecil, Cecil Wray!' cried the old man shrilly; 'how dare you say so! His heart is as black as his face! He is a murderer; and if I had had my way, I tell you I would have seen justice done, and had him hanged!'

I confess that it was wrong, but stung beyond endurance by this infamous speech, I forgot myself so far as to reply, with all the significance of which my voice was capable: 'Nay, we are all sorry for poor Batty, sir, but you should not allow *paternal affection* to blind you to the fact that his statement was unfounded.'

For an instant he glared upon me with a face convulsed by rage and hate, and then slammed the door behind me.

I doubt whether any course of conduct on my part, however diplomatic, would have much influenced the event; but, as it was, I felt that I had far from prospered in my wooing with grand-papa.

A BIRTHDAY.

ANOTHER year has passed away—so soon!

For soon it seems, although my calm life keeps

The sameness of a shadow-line that creeps

Down a blank wall from early morn to noon.

I still am waiting vainly to be taught,

By some dream realised, how much more keen

Is real joy than joy that is but seen

In visions fashioned by too idle thought.

Still, sadly wishful, every year I build

Some scheme by which, before the next is gone,

An eager crowd of hopes may be fulfilled.

Shall I in very fact ever ascend

The dreamed-of heaven, or half content pass on

Until some silent day shall bring the end?

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